turning the tide

a short history of the Pavilion Trust
Friends of the De La Warr Pavilion
1989–2002

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Bayliss•JBeal•RBeasley•AFBeecher•MargaretBeets•RalphBeyer•MarcusBinney•DBlaber•DavidBlake•DrJBlake
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JMarshman•BAMartin•RogerMaskew•BrendaMason•PennyMason•SMason•EstherMendelsohnJos
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RalphWood•Mr&MrsVWood•GilesWorsley•HelenWren•CJWroughton•JWycherley•AlineWyer•MrsJZimmer

turning the tide

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by Alastair Fairley

DE LA WARR PAVILION

Pavilion Trust
Friends of the De La Warr Pavilion

HOTEL

introduction

Formed in 1989 by a small group of enthusiasts, the Pavilion Trust's original aims were always clear. They were to ensure the conservation of the De La Warr Pavilion in a style concordant with its original architectural integrity and consistent social and artistic activities, and, to provide the advancement of public awareness of the historical, architectural and cultural importance of the Pavilion – locally, nationally and internationally.

Now, thirteen years later, much has been achieved and the vision of an exciting future both for the building and the town of Bexhill is about to become a reality.

During the long period of patient planning, the Trust has fought hard for the correct usage and restoration schemes, primarily the importance of maintaining the building's accessibility to the local community. Whilst at the same time accentuating the Pavilion's international profile this has, at times, been difficult. Only now do we feel we can enter this new era with confidence and optimism.

The Trust has completed many projects which have greatly enhanced the Pavilion and which are recorded here in this profile of our work and achievements. The Trust has also raised substantial funds for Rother District Council, the owners of the building, towards further restoration projects while its early commitment to education blossomed into a growing programme of design days, workshops and seminars involving hundreds of pupils at schools and colleges, both locally and beyond.

Like many voluntary organisations, nothing could have been achieved without the support of our members, many of whom have freely donated their time, money and skills and without which our very survival would have been under threat. As your chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, each and every one, for your generosity and good will.

Thanks are due to the Trust's Executive Committee who have worked tirelessly over many years to reach our goals. Our special thanks must also go to Jill Theis who, as one of our founder members, has brought constant energy and enthusiasm to our many endeavours. I would also like to record our gratitude to the staff of the De La Warr Pavilion for their efficient management and patient support during the past decade.

We now enter a new era, and seek to maintain a supporting role for this fine building as Friends of the De La Warr Pavilion, working with the new Charitable Trust which takes on the mantle of responsibility for the Pavilion for future years. Throughout, we hope to continue to support all aspects of the restoration and management projects about to be implemented.

In its record of all that the Trust has achieved, this small publication reflects a remarkable past, and will, I am sure, prove a valuable addition to the archive materials gathered over the years. For my own part I feel both grateful and honoured to have served as chairman of the Trust during this most exciting period, and look forward, as I am sure we all do, to a continuation of the Trust's work in its new role as Friends of the De La Warr Pavilion of the future.

Jan Wicks
Chairman, Pavilion Trust
May 2002

◀ *left to right*
Jan Wicks, Chairman, Pavilion Trust
John McAslan, Consultant Architect
Countess De La Warr
Photo: Julie Pierce-Martin

stopping the rot...

For many visitors to the present-day De La Warr Pavilion, it is hard to envisage the scale of the tasks faced by the Pavilion Trust to halt the progressive decline in the building's condition and fortunes. But while its work to conserve and restore the Pavilion's architecture may be its most visible achievement, the Trust's work goes far beyond mere repairs to concrete and steel.

The Pavilion of the 1980s was a very different place to the shining masterpiece that had first opened its doors back in 1935. Much had changed, and not for the better.

For example, the building's initial design provided a light, airy reading room and sun parlour on the first floor. These had been swept away in the 1960s to create what was to be known as the Elizabeth Room, a plain, low-ceilinged function room with a stone-clad bar at one end. The original furniture and bookshelving had long since disappeared. The space of Erich Mendelsohn's first-floor conference room, too, had been reduced and a false ceiling added, eliminating the natural light which made the room so spectacular. Patterned red carpet covered the former polished floors, and the building's earlier modernist furniture had disappeared, to be replaced by yellow plastic chairs *(pictured overleaf)*.

Alterations to the lobby limited the public's access to the sweeping north staircase at the front of the building. A bar had been added to the spacious theatre lobby; flock wallpaper now decorated the originally smooth plaster walls. The restaurant *(pictured left)* had lost several feet in width. Flagpoles had disappeared. The familiar roundels on the exterior, proclaiming the Pavilion's name, had also gone, and the full-length chrome light fitting in the south staircase had been painted blue. Gloomy – and tatty – the building showed all the hallmarks of years of poor upkeep.

Worse was to be found outside where the Pavilion's exterior was suffering the effects of sixty years on the sea-front. Cracks in the building's smooth rendered wall had let in corrosive, salty moisture. Cream tiles on the columns had been replaced. The balustrades, too, were corroding; steel, sliding windows had been closed, others had been covered up or replaced with wooden frames; the paving on the external terraces was cracked and worn.

The fabric of the Pavilion was not the only thing in need of attention. Faced with harsh economic realities, municipally-run arts and entertainment centres throughout the country were being pulled down to make way for housing projects and office developments. Loss-making, and with a rather dowdy entertainment programme, the Pavilion was as much under threat from its financial predicament as its architectural decay. Do nothing, and the rot would, no doubt, continue. But how to turn it round?

by raising support...

The first real steps in the remarkable reversal in the Pavilion's fortunes were taken all the way back in 1983, when a small group of enthusiasts for the building sought to influence the views of its owners on their election to Rother Council.

New councillors elected that year sought to persuade their fellow members that a more positive view should be taken of the Pavilion – that it should be seen as an opportunity for regenerating the area, not merely as a drain on Council resources.

There was a lot of talking to be done. The Pavilion had been haemorrhaging cash for years. If its simple upkeep was already beyond Rother's limited resources, redevelopment was out of the question, ran the majority view at the time. The arguments were familiar, and harked back to days when the Pavilion was originally built by the then Socialist mayor, the 9th Earl de La Warr. Put simply, why should Rother pour money into establishments whose purpose was to serve tourists, rather than the ratepayers who would be funding it?

Preservation, similarly, was not even on the list of objectives for councillors when building issues were considered at the time. Appointed, on her election, to the Council's Recreation and Tourism Committee, Councillor Jill Theis – who was later to become the founding member of the Pavilion Trust – was horrified to learn of plans to remove the building's original 1930s doors and replace them with modern substitutes. The question that this might be vandalising a unique piece of architecture was not considered important.

As a minority group, it was quickly understood that little progress could be made on rescuing the Pavilion without additional support. Alarm bells needed to be rung. As a result, in 1985, the enthusiasts invited some of the architectural press to tour the building as part of the Pavilion's (otherwise muted) golden jubilee celebrations.

Two key articles by Jonathan Glancey and David Hamilton Eddy appeared in the *RIBA Journal*, the internationally-renowned journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects. But while the excellence of the Pavilion's original design stood out, the

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picture they portrayed was a sad one, of a building in decline, in poor repair and in desperate need of funding for refurbishment. Architects all over the world were alerted. Shortly after, the BBC2 programme 'Building Sights' captured the mood. The Pavilion was, it said: 'a princess in rags'. The description stuck.

If the Pavilion's plight had now been highlighted to the media, the Council's ability to make any alterations to the building was also to come swiftly under the scrutiny of the authorities with the successful obtaining of the highest Grade 1 listing for the building after an application in 1986 by Rother's conservation officer, Geoff Dudman.

The only building in Bexhill to have ever been granted such an accolade, the listing introduced strict controls over what could, and could not be done to the Pavilion, requiring any alteration to be approved in advance by a raft of supervisory bodies prior to any work being carried out. While ostensibly halting any further insensitive modifications, the listing also provided a major opportunity for any supporters of the building – wherever they were – to have a real say in its future. In short, just the role for a supportive organisation like the Pavilion Trust.

But while the decline may have been halted officially, the much thornier issue of *how* any such future could be realised – or indeed what that future might be – was still to be resolved. The harsh economic environment nationwide still meant the local authority had little means to effect any major restoration, while the listing now meant lengthy debate and administration to ensure any redevelopment obtained the right permissions. Either way, it was a mammoth task.

...and launching the Trust

It was Rother Council's own Chief Executive at the time, David Powell, who first identified the establishment of the Pavilion Trust as a way to solve the problem. As an external organisation, the Trust could act independently of the Council, lobbying its members for a better deal for the Pavilion and keeping a watchful eye over its conservation. Perhaps more importantly, it could also act as a conduit for funding, appealing to charities and other institutions and accessing funds in ways impossible for a local authority.

The same year, 1987, a major touring exhibition organised by the radical architecture magazine *A3 Times* to mark the centenary of Erich Mendelsohn, the building's architect, opened at the De La Warr Pavilion. It sought to reinstate Mendelsohn's central position in the context of European Modernism (he was born the same year as Le Corbusier) and not only highlighted the importance of the De la Warr Pavilion in the development of modern British architecture but also provided the occasion for a meeting between Cyril Sweett, Mendelsohn's original quantity surveyor for the construction, and councillors desperate to find a way of securing the building's restoration. This chance meeting set the ball rolling towards the creation of the Trust, so vital for the building's restoration over the coming years. Sweett immediately offered to help, calling on some of his many friends in the world of architecture to come to the aid of this important 20th century landmark.

In March 1989 a simple meeting was organised in the Pavilion's foyer. Some fifteen local councillors and members of the public turned up – but the group already had impressive allies. Sweett had managed to enlist the support of a string of powerful patrons, including Sir Hugh Casson, Director of Architecture for the Festival of Britain, former president of the Royal Academy and Provost of the Royal College of Art, Sir Denys Lasdun, architect of the National Theatre, and Lord Rayne, one of its board members and the chairman of London Merchant Securities. The grandson of the building's founder, the 11th Earl De La Warr, and the architect's daughter, Esther Mendelsohn Joseph, had also agreed to act as patrons. Later, after the deaths of Sir Hugh Casson and Sir Denys Lasdun, Sir John Smith and Lady Susan Lasdun took their place.

The meeting appointed four Trustees: Peter Evenden, a chartered building surveyor and widely respected Bexhill citizen, as Chairman; Don Kimber, who succeeded him in 1991; Christine Bayliss and Jill Theis, both Rother Councillors. It immediately set to work. Two months later it held a meeting to establish a steering group which later became the Executive Committee – a committed group of local people, planners, architects and other professionals which has met regularly ever since.

The following years were to prove crucial for the De La Warr Pavilion. Arguments have raged over its architecture, its programme of events, even its very existence as an entertainment centre. But it is the story of a community, of the building which serves it, the small District Council which owns it, and of a small group of dedicated enthusiasts whose tireless work has finally won through and secured the restoration of one of the finest examples of modernist architecture now acclaimed throughout the world.

It is, in no small part, the story of the Pavilion Trust.

restoring the past...

Some organisations hail from grand plans with ambitious ideals. Others owe their existence more to chance encounters and dogged perseverance. The Pavilion Trust is a bit of a hybrid.

Looking back, its activities have focused on three main areas. Firstly, restoration, whether through specific projects it has funded or in ensuring wider restoration programmes are carried out sensitively. Secondly, education, through the Trust's development of an active programme run in conjunction with schools colleges and universities. Its last field of endeavour has been its vital campaigning role, both to ensure a secure future for the Pavilion and recognition of its importance as an international landmark.

But while the way in which the Pavilion set about its tasks may seem familiar to anyone involved in preservation, arts development or heritage projects, the Trust had no real blueprint to follow as it started to tackle the tasks before it. Nor, despite a number of well-meaning efforts, was there any real strategy behind it. It simply pushed out on all boundaries, made as many connections as it could, garnered support wherever it thought there may be some to be found. Only in retrospect does it appear to have any method. Perhaps this was an aspect of its success: rather than calculated and clever, its intentions and actions were, by contrast, merely well-meant and earnest.

◀ **Initial restoration work exposed severe damage to the balcony steels. Photo: John Cocker**

a strategic direction....

In poor repair, and with a catalogue of unsympathetic additions and alterations over the years, the Pavilion Trust knew the building it was seeking to rescue was in dire need of restoration. But it was also quick to recognise if similar mistakes were to be avoided in the future, the approach to its restoration needed to be far better thought out than had happened throughout the '60s and '70s.

But time was of the essence. Severe damage had started to appear on the Pavilion's sea-facing elevation and Rother District Council had already commissioned a survey by a local firm of structural engineers to identify the repairs required. Fearful this would start off yet another round of (ultimately damaging) renovation work, the Trust instead proposed a firm of external architects be commissioned to make a comprehensive study of the building, its architecture and its possible future – a bigger picture, giving a more strategic view of how the building could be redeveloped, and work undertaken.

But the reaction from the Council was frosty. Rejecting the proposal, the Council instead instructed its own architect to start work on the Pavilion once the structural engineer's report had been received. The Trust, however, was not to be deterred so easily from its aims.

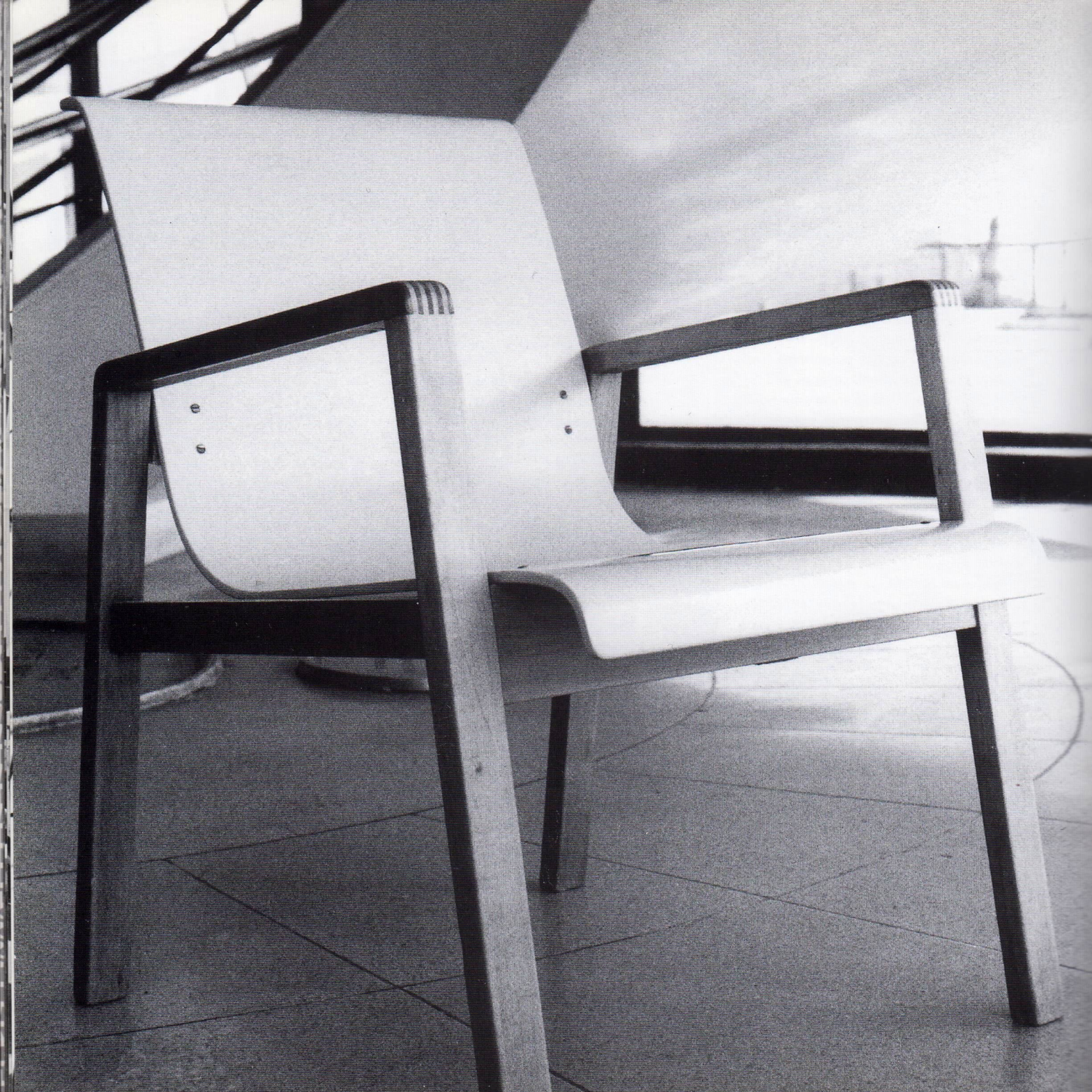
Throughout the following year, this small – but growing – group of Pavilion enthusiasts continued to lobby councillors, organise events and liaise with the press to get its voice heard for its restoration plans.

Step-by-step, an approach was to develop which was to serve the Trust well over the coming years. It was one of practical support for fundraising initiatives, engagement with the local community, and profile-raising amongst key influencers and players on the national and international stage.

With restoration as its main priority, the Trust sought to persuade Rother Council to appoint a leading architect to oversee the work. As a first step, it undertook an exhaustive shortlisting and interview process to identify the right architect for the job. Co-ordinated by RIBA, the Trust's panel included representatives from the Arts Council and English Heritage as well as Rother's Chief Executive, architect John Miller and engineer Frank Newby. It eventually settled on the relatively young practice of Troughton McAslan – later to become John McAslan & Partners – to conduct a strategic review of the Pavilion and draw up plans for its redevelopment.

The Trust had already started its educational programme, showing its commitment to developing the Pavilion as a resource for learning. It had maintained its campaigns in the press and attracted national media to cover its plight. It had also developed a distinctive image and design style created for it by Jeremy Brook, which has been subsequently used widely by the Pavilion.

Work was also taking place in other areas. To keep members up to date, it had already launched a newsletter, a journal which it has published three times a year ever since. Informal meetings to discuss the future of the Pavilion had been organised, and talks and lectures were given, all designed to ensure the local community had as much a voice in the building's restoration as those viewing it from a national perspective.



However, most significant amongst these early initiatives was its organisation of a visit to the Pavilion in November 1990 by the outspoken Arts Council chairman Peter Palumbo, who duly added his own voice in support of the Trust's campaign to recognise the building as a national, as well as local asset, and plan its restoration accordingly.

His words did not go unheeded. With elections in 1991 bringing in a new regime of councillors to the Council, Rother finally agreed to the Trust's key campaign to appoint external architects to plot the building's future redevelopment.

This was a vital step in ensuring any future work contributed toward agreed strategic goals for the Pavilion, rather than the stop-gap immediate needs which had led it to suffer so greatly over the years. It could also not have been more timely. Initial repairs to the South Terrace had revealed far worse damage to the building's internal steel structure than had first been anticipated. The costs were rising steeply, as were concerns over the capabilities of local teams to complete the work to the high standards required.

Troughton McAslan had, by now, completed the Trust's 'Stage One Strategy Report' which was published in January 1992. It was, in short, a blueprint for the Pavilion's future restoration and provided, for the first time, a clear, independent view of the building's potential and towards which everyone could now work.

Alvar Aalto's original furniture now graces the building once more. Photo: Bob Mazzer

It came not a moment too soon. Escalating problems with repairs to the Pavilion's balconies by the Council's architects meant the restoration project was running into serious difficulties. As more severe damage was uncovered weekly it became clear the work required greater expertise and experience than first anticipated. His high-profile report just completed, the Trust's consulting architect John McAslan was the logical choice to take over responsibility for the works. His subsequent appointment by Rother meant the Trust had succeeded in one of its primary goals, ensuring that the Pavilion's restoration, its future building works and eventual redevelopment would now be undertaken by an architect of the calibre required for such a complicated, and high-profile task.

A major step forward for the De La Warr Pavilion, it was also a huge feather in the cap for the Pavilion Trust. Its arguments had won through. The restoration of the south terraces, already under way, were now assured of fitting into an organised, agreed plan.

...and practical restoration projects

With a new, agreed strategy in place, the Trust was swiftly to set about developing the other key feature of its approach towards the Pavilion's restoration – tackling specific, practical restoration projects under its own banner.

Money had already started to come into the Trust from its founding patrons, Cyril Sweett and, via Lord Rayne, the Rayne Foundation. But in 1992, the Trust launched the first in a series of successful fundraising campaigns to fund more extensive works.

The Countess De La Warr appeal targeted £20,000 to relocate the building's flagpole to its original position above the North staircase, as well as restoring both the stunning chrome light on the South staircase, stripping away years of blue paint, and reinstating the original aluminium roundels to the building's exterior which announced it to passers-by, never seen since the war.

By the following year, enough had been raised to start work on both the flagpole and light fitting, both being restored to their former glory in 1994. Funding for the restoration of the roundels took longer to obtain – three years longer – as increasing costs saw the final figure for the Countess De La Warr appeal rise to £35,000. But, like so many of the Trust's appeals, perseverance won through and the roundels were reinstated to the building in 1997.

1994 also saw the Trust launch an altogether different appeal to restore a hidden cache of the building's original furniture discovered in the Pavilion's attic in the 1980s. The twelve chairs and eight tables had been designed by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, and had originally been placed in the Pavilion's ground-floor cafeteria. Made of birch and bent plywood, the valuable furniture had, nevertheless, been painted, damaged, and, ultimately stored in a dusty corner, neglected for several years.

By enabling each chair or table to be restored separately, however, the Trust found a new way to bring individual donors into the restoration programme by sponsoring a chair or a table separately, for smaller sums. Over the years, more furniture was unearthed. As a result, the Trust has now returned no less than twelve

chairs, fifteen tables and two stools to their original condition and colour, all of which are now used daily throughout the building by the visiting public.

To maintain progress on the wider restoration project, in 1993, the Trust commissioned Troughton McAslan to draw up a second strategy report for the future restoration of the Pavilion, presenting it to the Council in June that year and successfully securing their backing for its approach. It was also assisting Rother in the much larger fundraising tasks it had before it, working with a professional fundraising consultant to advise both it, and the Council on approaches to funding bodies. From the start, English Heritage gave constant support to the process, and was now making consistent grant contributions to the project.

Its role as an arms-length fundraising partner to the Council was to continue throughout the ensuing years. By 1995, sufficient funding had already been raised in this way to start the much-awaited restoration of the building's interior, enabling the first-floor bar and cramped function room to be swept away in favour of a new gallery space, open-plan bar and brighter, flexible meeting space suitable for a whole variety of purposes. Most importantly, the new designs returned the first floor facilities back to the original proportions laid out by Mendelsohn himself, recapturing the master's vision for the building's sun-filled south elevation.

By now over £1.5million had been spent on the restoration of the Pavilion, with the Trust providing over £168,000 of that from the £270,000 it had raised overall for restoration and other Trust projects. It was a remarkable achievement for an organisation starting from scratch just six years previously.

In 1996, an ambitious £8.9million plan for the Pavilion's redevelopment was put forward to the Arts Lottery Board by Rother's new, forward-thinking Director of Tourism and Leisure, Anthony Leonard. Though the overall bid failed, the Arts Council did award £½million to the Council to further develop the plan, singling out the Trust for its practical and supportive role in the project, highlighting its work in both the educational and fundraising fields as important factors in its assessment of progress. It was a major step forward, and the biggest single award notched up for the Pavilion to date. A new Project Director for the Pavilion, Caroline Collier, was appointed to take the process forward.

One of the Trust's most urgent fundraising tasks was to obtain the original Edward Wadsworth study for the Pavilion's famous mural. Having identified the owner several years before when first the study had come up for auction, the Trust was offered the chance to buy it when it came up for sale once more. Inspired by the opportunity to reunite both study and mural in the building for the first time since Wadsworth designed them, the Trust rapidly launched a campaign for the £12,000 asking price, successfully meeting its target in December 1998.

The same year, the Trust also launched its biggest single appeal to date, aimed at raising some £75,000 to design and build a new bandstand for the Pavilion terrace. Constructed in the 1970s, the brick-built bandstand had long been a contentious issue for the building's restoration plans for, while ugly and obtrusive, it nevertheless was a necessary feature of the Pavilion's highly popular summer concerts on the terrace.

Yet after only a few months of campaigning, sufficient funds had been raised to enable a national competition for the bandstand's design to go ahead, the winning architect, Niall McLaughlin, Britain's Young Architect of the Year in 1998.

And in December 2001, after a two-year appeal, the Pavilion's revolutionary new bandstand was finally hoisted into place, a futuristic, movable construction befitting the terrace of a much-restored Pavilion. The crowning glory to twelve years of arduous fundraising work in which as much as £400,000 had been raised by the Trust and its group of enthusiastic volunteers.

◀ **Restoration of the first floor created a modern art gallery.**

building for the future... through education

The erection of the new bandstand not only marked the successful completion of a major fundraising campaign for the Trust: it also concluded one of its most successful education projects.

As early as 1992, the Trust had recognised that the Pavilion offered an ideal opportunity as a resource for education: an investment not only in the building's future, but in it its future users as well. Though commonplace today, its pioneering work in this field saw it develop an extensive series of educational programmes over the following decade which have involved thousands of students both locally, nationally, and from all over the world.

As a means of continuing the Pavilion's original ideals – of learning, relaxation and healthy activity – the Trust's educational resources have proved a valuable addition to its work to breathe new life into a decaying building. But as a way of involving communities in the restoration programme – particularly the local community – it has proved second to none.

Only two years into its life, the Trust was already developing plans for its first foray into the educational field, raising funds for an artist and architect in residence project, ultimately launched in 1992. Collaborating with South East Arts, the Royal Institute of British Architects and the local education authority, architect Susie French and artist Anne Tockwell were appointed to work with both children from the local primary and secondary schools and students from Bexhill Sixth Form College to widen their awareness of the built environment by working on a number of projects related to the Pavilion and its restoration.

Struck by the enthusiastic response amongst the students for courses, the programme of workshops, seminars and exhibitions was then expanded upon during the following year with establishment of a wider education project, run in conjunction with the Construction Industry Training Board and coordinated by Gill Hamilton. A resource pack was developed which was linked to the national curriculum and carried a bibliography for visiting students, enabling anyone seeking to learn more about building techniques (and those used in the Pavilion in particular) to gain knowledge in a constructive way that fitted with their own educational learning programmes.

The teachers' information pack that was developed formed the basis for the promotion of the Pavilion as a resource for local schools in the area, allowing the Trust to then expand its educational appeal to those in higher education as well. In 1994, the Trust negotiated with Rother Council to establish and equip an education resource room at the Pavilion that could be used by visiting schools and student groups, with a small library, archive material, videos and photographs.

In only a brief period, therefore, the Pavilion Trust had firmly established one of the Pavilion's core activities – now a central plank of its strategy – to use the building as a learning resource as well as a social and entertainments centre. All the while, it was bringing in future users and supporters of the building.

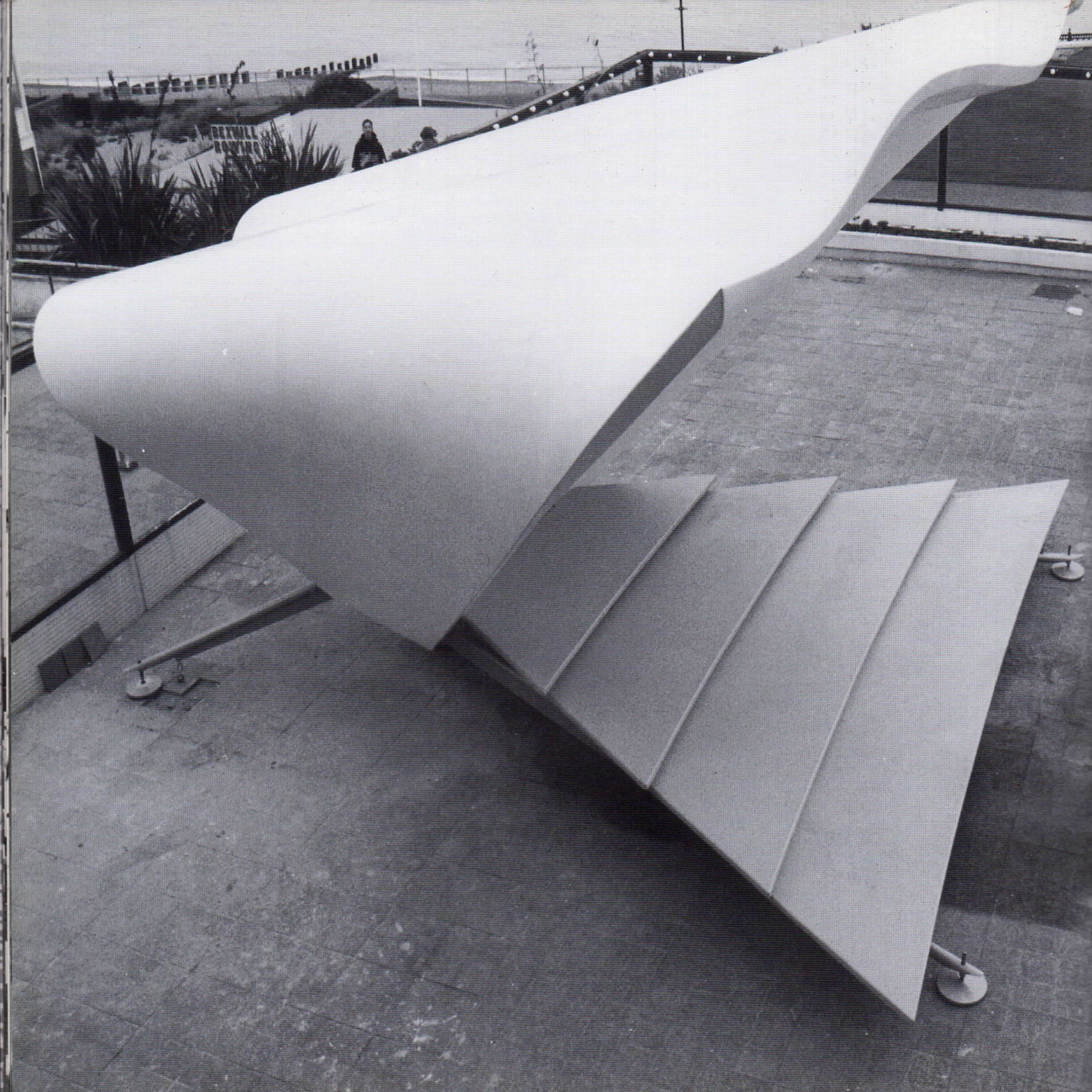
The following year, the programme expanded again with a design workshop organised in conjunction with RIBA South East Region, bringing together teams of architects, students, building professionals and members of the public to develop ideas for future uses and designs for the Pavilion. A separate scheme for primary school children ran throughout the term with professional architects judging the work at its conclusion.

In response to growing demand for information about the building itself, the Trust also launched a programme of guided tours throughout the building, including its less-visited, but architecturally important, roof and backstage areas. To date, several thousand students, members of the public, tour groups and local societies have participated – as well as leading architects from all over the world – learning a raft of information on the building's pioneering construction techniques, its design and the way in which it used materials.

For much the same reasons, members of the Trust's executive committee also started delivering lectures and talks to local societies and groups eager to learn more about the building's construction and its history, widening understanding of the Pavilion's importance while also frequently garnering valuable funds and support for its work.

To coincide with the Pavilion's 60th birthday celebrations the Trust commissioned a multimedia presentation of the Pavilion's history, while also hosting a Schools Science and Technology Challenge, the prizes being awarded by the daughter of the building's architect, Esther Mendelsohn Joseph.

◀ **Local primary schoolchildren played a major part in designing the new bandstand.**


BERKWELL
BOATING

Over 1995-96, the Trust launched a major exercise to source recollections of the building in a series of taped interviews, lest such information be lost for ever in future years. Conducted by Heather Morrey, the resulting collection unearthed a mine of information about the building, first-hand witnesses to its construction in 1935, recollections from those who had worked with its designers Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff, together with a number of important photographs to augment its collection.

The following year, it built on its long involvement with Civic Trust heritage open days – when tours would be offered free to the public – by developing a more extensive programme of events surrounding National Architecture Week. Ever since, the Trust has worked with the Pavilion management to host a series of seminars, workshops, exhibitions and schools activities to further extend the buildings growing profile as a centre for art and architecture, nationwide.

In the same year, the Trust commissioned historian Graham Whitham to compile an archive of the Pavilion's growing collection of books, designs, photographs and other materials to enable future generations to research information on the building and its architect with greater ease. The resulting archive has since provided an invaluable resource for a steady stream of dissertations and research studies by architecture and sociology students, each adding further to the knowledge and understanding of this unique landmark.

Lectures and seminars on the building or related subjects were high on the list of priorities, and throughout the Trust's thirteen years in existence, some of the country's leading architects and historians have delivered talks to thousands of enthusiastic followers. From early talks on the restoration programme by architect John McAslan, the Trust has sought to cover a broad range of subjects from such leading experts as Professor Floris van den Broecke, Head of the School of Architecture and Furniture at the Royal College of Art, Alan Powers of the Twentieth Century Society, Peter Bareham, Senior Lecturer at Brighton University School of Architecture and Dr. Malcolm Higgs, then Head of the Canterbury School of Architecture.

The Trust also continued its work in developing its own records of the building's history, commissioning local historian Alastair Fairley to write *Bucking the Trend*, the first biography of the building's founder, the maverick politician and 9th Earl De La Warr, commissioned to coincide with the centenary of his birth in 2000.

But it was in the development of the Pavilion's bandstand that the Trust's pioneering work in education really came to fruition. From the outset, Niall McLaughlin, the architect commissioned to design the structure, developed a close working partnership not only with his team of builders, structural engineers and junior architects, but with the local schools as well.

Throughout the course of the bandstand's design and construction stages, a series of design days and workshops were developed in association with the local education partnerships to involve twenty four students from eight local primary schools with all stages of its creation. Supported by students from Canterbury and Brighton Schools of Architecture, engineering and construction techniques were taught, models built and design ideas encouraged, the best of them being taken on by the professional team and actually integrated with the structure's eventual result.

This highly unusual approach towards a major design commission is now not only winning recognition for its originality of design, but is attracting interest from other educational authorities around the country, resurrecting the De La Warr Pavilion's long-held tradition as a pioneer in technique and ideas.

Awards aside, the project's principal achievement now stands proudly on the Pavilion's terrace for all to enjoy: confirmation, if any were needed, that it is in the future that the Pavilion's real promise lies, as yet another generation of Sussex schoolchildren grow up to celebrate their own contribution to Bexhill's continually-developing landmark building.

◀ **The new bandstand unveiled.**
Photo: Michael McHugh

14 THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, THURSDAY, JULY 12, 1990 * * *

ARCHITECTURE

Shame and scandal in Bexhill-on-Sea

Kenneth Powell laments the decline of the De La Warr Pavilion but notes that there is some hope for its future

"THE MOST hideous thing I have ever seen — a very good hoarding for advertisements." This was the reaction of one local resident, a Lt Col A.E. Dallas, to the new De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill-on-Sea. He would doubtless be pleased to see that the Pavilion, one of the most famous buildings of the 1930s, has indeed become something of an advertisement hoarding, with the street front of the building featuring garish posters for forthcoming attractions in the Pavilion Theatre.

Inside, the cool and stylish lines of the entrance hall are submerged beneath a welter of clutter — posters, pictures, showcases, potted plants. One hardly notices a mural by Edward Wadsworth, originally painted for the restaurant. ... to come. ... ant and the bar ... original fur- ... been

flee from their own land".

The choice of Mendelsohn and Chermayeff was certainly a brave one. Although a generally "modern" style had been demanded in the competition brief, the winning entry was a thorough-going product of the Continental Modern Movement. Bernard Shaw declared: "Bexhill has emerged from barbarism at last."

The sceptics of the 1930s have certainly been confounded. Whilst it was never the palace of culture which Earl De La Warr pro... wanted, the Pavilion ... proved immensely popu... over 50 years.

difficult". All this suggests that there is a conflict of opinion and interests.

The Pavilion Trust is making a start on restoring a spectacular chromed steel light fitting, covered with layers of gloss paint, which hangs in the south staircase (one of the most impressive 20th-century spaces in this country). The Trust hopes to shame the Council into continuing the rescue operation.

Yet the Council still seems unaware just how good the De

'Its present stat... a national disgr...

Last year, however, a group of local people f... Pavilion Trust with th... ...toring the bu... ...under m...

Wednesday 11 December 1991

OBSERVER ARTS

Lack of a policy to preserve our few good examples of twentieth-century architecture i...

Will the barbarians triumph at Bexhill?

Rory Coonan bemoans the neglect of the De La Warr Entertainments Pavilion, a Grade 1 listed mast...

'DELIGHTED,' telegraphed George Bernard Shaw, 'to hear that Bexhill has emerged from Barbarism at last.' The opening of the De La Warr Entertainments Pavilion at Bexhill-on-Sea in 1935 caused a sensation. ...ng George V and Queen ...ry visited the building ...ribed by the *Daily Express* ...he last word in modern ...ecture'.

...missioned by the M... ...ill, the Earl ... ...tion ...

District Council, owners and ... operators of the thriving se... side arts centre. The ... notes 'damage ... components' ... spalli...

10 • Monday March 27 2000 *The Guardian*

Arts Architecture

And they want to turn this into a pub?

Jonathan Glancey visits Bexhill's threatened De La Warr Pavilion

The Dome at Worthing. The Moorings at Largs. The West Pier, Brighton. The Regency terraces of Ramsgate. All gone, going or very much down on their luck. We are careless with our best and most enjoyable seaside architecture. We let it fall to pieces, destroy it or undermine it, as if the sea itself were not threat enough.

Now the same fate hangs over the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea, a Modern masterpiece that shares its Grade I listing with cathedrals and great country houses.

This spacious, streamlined, light structure is a perfect foil to both the boisterous grey of the English Channel ...

globe lamps. The public had seen nothing like it.

Sir Charles Reilly, then professor of architecture at Liverpool University, described the pavilion, with its welded-steel frame, as "a revelation from another planet in the rococo redness of that terrible town". More than six decades on, a recent poll for English Heritage ranked the De La Warr Pavilion the country's third best-loved building of the past 100 years.

Since 1989 it has been cared for by the Pavilion Trust, established by Jill Theis, a former local councillor, and by Troughton McAslan, the architects charged with its renovation. But now Rother District Council is thinking of selling the place to the Watford-...

...tectural ... public buildings ... it would be ironic ... if the Bexhill Pavilion ... to rot.

The Pavilion's darin...

THE INDEPENDENT

Long neglected, but still the object of public pride, the De La Warr Pavilion is to be restored to its

Bexhill's Bauhaus-on-Sea

J & V COCKER

Fifty years of decline have taken their toll on the De La Warr Pavilion, but the seafront building remains a popular meeting place

PETER EVENDEN's voice takes on a ...erious tone when he is asked if he re...embers the opening of the De La ...arr Pavilion. Chin cupped thought...lly in hand, he is suddenly lost in ...emories of a rough English seaside ...ter more than 50 years ago. "Yes, it ... a shock when the pavilion ...ned," he says. "It was a miserable ...ember day and already getting

The making of a masterpiece

AT FIRST glance it is difficult to see quite why the De La Warr Pavilion is such a popular building with the el...

was the first public building in Britain designed and built on International Style principles, an inspiration

stumped up £100,000 of his own money for the building. Much to the profession's surprise, the competition

Corbusier leather armchairs in the entrance hall and the spotless white walls and glass partitions point to the partners' interest in the heroic days of the Modern Movement.

Troughton McAslan has completed its proposals and has been appointed to act as consultants to the council. The restoration will ... in Bexhill ...

building for the future... by campaigning for recognition

If there is an activity which, above all others, stands out as the most important contribution the Pavilion Trust has made to the conservation of the De La Warr Pavilion – and its establishment as a major arts centre for the South East and beyond – it has been its role as champion of the building, a 'keeper of the faith' which campaigns for its prosperity and wellbeing.

In the main, this key role has involved the Trust working in partnership with others. But, at times, it has also required it to be prepared to stand out in opposition to those who differed with its views. Throughout, the Trust has maintained that the Pavilion represented (and still represents) a major asset for both Bexhill, the nation and the international arts and architectural communities. And one which, through proper, sensitive restoration and redevelopment could serve all equally well. A complicated task, certainly; its achievement, no mean feat.

Since its inception in 1989, the Trust has enjoyed a close working relationship with Rother District Council, although it has not always seen eye to eye with it on policy regarding the building. Central to this relationship was the role enjoyed by Councillor Jill Theis on the key Recreation and Tourism Committee which was responsible for the building's care, programming and redevelopment. As the founding member of the Trust also, her dual role became even more pronounced when she became chair of the committee in 1991.

Other influential contacts were to start advising the Trust's executive committee, too. For example, the conservation officers of both Rother and East Sussex County Council started coming to Trust committee meetings, advising on listed building issues or providing advice on where to apply for funding. Jan Wicks, former mayor of Bexhill, joined the committee to head up its fundraising appeals. Becoming Trust chairman in 1996, she has provided strong leadership and a steady hand during the Trust's most active years. Councillors Margaret Jones and Pauline Bullock also joined the committee, providing valuable insight into the often delicate relations with the Pavilion's municipal owners.

But 'persuading' others with different views depends on more than just councillors in the chamber. And while membership of the Trust itself has grown considerably over the years, rarely has its number officially topped 300: hardly the basis for a majority view. But the Trust swiftly gained ground in its campaign to conserve the Pavilion through its ability to garner much wider support from the highest echelons of the arts, architecture and the press. With the Pavilion metaphorically falling into the sea, not only did it have a story to tell, but the urgency of the situation has frequently led its supporters to act swiftly, wherever required.

From the crucial invitation to the architectural press that first highlighted the building's plight to the world in 1985, the Trust has expertly juggled the twin tasks of gathering top-level support with high-profile publicity for its actions, achievements and goals.

No opportunity to champion the Pavilion was missed. In 1990, for example, it organised a joint event with the Thirties Society for over 100 people, its chairman Gavin Stamp lauding Mendelsohn as 'a towering figure in twentieth century world architecture who has not yet received the recognition he deserves.'

It wasted no time in publicising the comments by Arts Council chairman Peter Palumbo, visiting the building later that year, swiftly capitalising on his visit with meetings with both the regional arts funding bodies, and the Royal Institution of British Architects.

Articles in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Observer* also drew attention to the Pavilion's decline – and the hope that the Trust may be able to reverse its fortunes – while the DoCoMoMo conference in Eindhoven, Holland, drew attention to the Pavilion and the need for sympathetic protection for modern buildings.

By 1994, its promotional campaign had seen reports on the Pavilion's architecture and restoration programme by the BBC and Meridian TV, together with a series of reports on local radio. Features had also been carried in a broad array of newspapers and magazines, including *The Times, The Independent, The Guardian* and a full-page colour profile of the building in the prestigious *New York Times*.

Its newly-developed tours of the building brought in hundreds of well-wishers, many of whom would tarry a while by the Trust's regular stall, held at weekends and manned entirely by volunteers, to talk about progress and offer their support. Director of the Tate Gallery Sir Nicholas Serota and his wife were one such couple to have visited the Pavilion and develop a relationship with the Trust in this way only recently.

As restoration works were completed, further publicity was gained in both the architectural and national press. The creation of the first-floor art gallery enabled the building's new Director,

Caroline Collier, to develop a dynamic programme of exhibitions, attracting national critics to its shows. And while controversy over the building's future continued locally, the growing awareness of the Pavilion nationally was, nevertheless, succeeding in raising its profile as an arts centre for a much wider community than had previously been entertained.

Encouraged by its growing profile nationally, the Trust sought to continue to develop local support for its goals as well. Its programme of educational activities meant more and more schoolchildren and college and university students were passing through its doors each year, each forging a new relationship with the building. Its programme of talks to local societies and groups also played a key role, the growing tally of donations and grants flowing in return further confirmation that its original views of the building's role were gaining acceptance.

Nationally, and internationally, the same progress was being repeated. In 1998, the Pavilion was one of only two English buildings nominated by DoCoMoMo for the UNESCO World Heritage list, a group of the world's most important buildings from Stonehenge to Sri Lanka. Proposals for the building's redevelopment gained the backing of English Heritage. And the then Culture Secretary Chris Smith MP became the first (but not the last!) Government minister to visit the building while in office.

In short, the restoration of the De La Warr Pavilion had become an issue. And the Pavilion Trust was making sure it was an issue which was not going away.

But its biggest battle for the future of the Pavilion was yet to come, and in that the Pavilion Trust was to find out just how important its work was to raise the building's profile nationally and internationally.

Backed by its original £½million Lottery grant, the Pavilion management and Rother Council had developed an even more ambitious £16.5 bid for Lottery funds, to establish the building as a European centre for art and architecture. But escalating costs at the Lottery-backed redevelopment of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden had scandalised the nation, causing a wholesale re-think of the use of Lottery funds for such major projects. Rejecting Rother's bid, the Arts Lottery Board, nevertheless, left the door ajar for future applications, suggesting the Council 're-scope' its application. The disappointment amongst all was palpable.

Stung by this failure, and desperate for a resolution to the mounting costs of running the building, in September 1999, the newly-elected Council invited expressions of interests from private contractors interested in a possible private/public partnership to take over the refurbishment and running of the building.

The proposals caused uproar. Arts Minister Alan Howarth weighed into the debate at a visit to the building in 2000 saying he was 'strongly opposed' to the proposals, while critics throughout the national press decried the possibility the building could be lost to the nation.

Throughout that year the arguments raged, fanned by the news that one of the bidders attracted by the Council offer was the pub chain JD Wetherspoon. Under the banner of 'public amenity or public house?' the Pavilion Trust became the voice for opposition to the bid. Letters were fired off to key allies. Protestors packed Council meetings. Supporters came in all shapes and sizes. Trust committee member Margaret Jones led a campaign which saw over 5,000 people sign a petition to Rother Council. Leading architects such as Lord Rogers and Sir Denys Lasdun – a Trust patron – wrote to both the Council and the national press. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, even 'enquired' about the future of the Pavilion in a letter to the Council, since she had opened the building with her husband the future King in 1935.

Meanwhile, backroom politics were also being played out. In July 1999, Rother were informed by the Arts Council that funds had been ring-fenced (but not guaranteed) for the Pavilion subject to a fresh bid being prepared, a fact which questioned Council's move to attract commercial investors. To get the Council to move on it, the Arts Council then offered Rother £120,000 to commission consultant architect John McAslan's team to produce new designs.

The crescendo of concern rose. *The Times* reported: 'half the towns of Europe now dream of building a modern masterpiece like the Bilbao Guggenheim. Amazingly, sedate Bexhill achieved this 65 years ago.' The Pavilion – and the threat to its future – also featured in a major documentary on Channel 4 by architect Piers Gough. Perhaps most significantly, Shadow Culture Secretary Peter Ainsworth MP toured the building with the leader of Rother Council, Ivor Brampton, and the prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate – now MP – for Bexhill and Battle, Greg Barker. Speaking of the crucial role the

◀ Bexhill schoolchildren attending a Rother planning committee meeting to lobby support for the new bandstand.

DLWP 2002
VARIETY
DLWP Studio
DLWP 2002 EVENTS
TODAY
CHILDRENS STORY TELLING

building played both in the town's cultural heritage – and in its future – he pointed out "tourism, arts and leisure are the fastest-growing areas of economic growth today".

It is difficult to discern any single voice which led Rother Council to retract its proposal – in October 2000 – that the Pavilion should be run by the private sector. Perhaps it was even the words of the building's founder, the socialist 9th Earl De La Warr who maintained the Pavilion's construction costs be met by public, rather than private funds, stating: 'if it is going to pay private enterprise, it is going to pay the town.' Whatever the voice of reason was, none could have been more clearly heard than that of the Pavilion Trust.

The arguments won, the new bid for Arts Lottery funding was able to proceed, spearheaded by the Pavilion's experienced new Project Director, Alan Haydon. Successful – at last – in April 2002 the bid secured a major £4.1million grant from the Arts Council, topped up with a further £1.9 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the redevelopment and refurbishment of the Pavilion. Throughout, the Pavilion Trust has continued in its fundraising, profile-raising, educational and campaigning role to support the process.

As the Pavilion moves into a new era and its ownership and management passes to the new De La Warr Pavilion Charitable Trust, the many members and supporters of the old Pavilion Trust can continue to support the building as the Friends of the De La Warr Pavilion.

The Pavilion Trust showed the way forward for a District Council. It developed pioneering educational programmes, raised vital funds, supported and often created new fields of activity now commonplace amongst major arts centres, forged close ties with the local community it served and helped to establish the De La Warr Pavilion as one of the most important buildings of the twentieth century in the world.

◀ **The Pavilion's proposed new Community Wing**
John McAslan + Partners

chronology

1989 First meeting of informal group of supporters. Fourteen attend. Pavilion Trust established.
Structural damage to Pavilion appears. Rother District Council starts work on restoration.

1990 Joint meeting held with Thirties Society at Pavilion. Guests include Esther Mendelsohn Joseph and Lady Kitty Giles, daughters of the architect and founding 9th Earl.
Arts Council Chairman Peter Palumbo visits Pavilion.

1991 Trust appoints architects Troughton McAslan to prepare strategic report on Pavilion's restoration.

1992 Troughton McAslan publish strategy report. Commended by Arts Council, accepted by Rother.
Troughton McAslan appointed by Rother as consultant architects.
Balcony and South elevation restoration work completed.
Trust launches first education project of artist and architect in residence.
Trust launches Countess De La Warr appeal to restore Pavilion flagpoles, light and roundels.

1993 Education project expanded to include education pack and resource room at Pavilion.
Anthony Leonard appointed Director of Tourism & Leisure at Rother.

1994 Trust restores flagpole and light fitting at Pavilion.
Trust receives major £75,000 grant from Foundation for Sport & the Arts.

1995 Trust plays significant role in funding restoration work to first-floor gallery, bar and function room.
Trust launches guided tour programme, design workshop event with RIBA, and archive project to catalogue and collect material relating to building.
Appeal starts to restore Alvar Aalto tables and chairs.
Rother makes first £8.5million bid for National Lottery funds for restoration.
Pavilion's 60th anniversary celebrations.

1996 Caroline Collier appointed Pavilion Director.
Serge Chermayeff dies.
Main bid rejected, but Pavilion awarded £½ million from National Lottery.

1997 Rother develops second bid for National Lottery funds.
Countess De La Warr appeal closed. Roundels reinstated to building's facade.
Rother establishes De La Warr Pavilion Charitable Trust. Left dormant until funding is secured.

1998 Trust launches appeal to purchase original Wadsworth sketch for Pavilion mural.
Arts Council rejects second £16.5million National Lottery bid. Provides £120,000 to 're-scope' bid.
Trust secures Wadsworth sketch.
Trust launches competition to appoint architect to design new bandstand.

1999 Trust appoints architect Niall MacLaughlin to design new bandstand. Education project to involve schools in design process. Patron Sir Hugh Casson dies. Sir John Smith becomes a patron.
Arts Council announces it has set aside £4million for Pavilion restoration.
Rother announces search for private enterprise partner to take over Pavilion.
Alan Haydon appointed new Pavilion Director.
Sir John Smith, friend of 9th Earl De La Warr, appointed patron.

2000 Arts Minister Alan Howarth visits Pavilion.
Trust organises a 5,000-strong petition to Rother Council objecting to proposals.
Leading architects Richard Rogers and Denys Lasdun object to private sector redevelopment.
Trust publishes biography of founder 9th Earl De La Warr by Alastair Fairley.
U-turn by Rother sees Council drop plans to sell Pavilion to pub chain; supports new Lottery bid.

2001 Patron Sir Denys Lasdun dies. Lady Susan Lasdun, becomes Trust Patron.
New bid for Lottery funding entered to Arts Council for restoration plans.
Trust hosts series of school workshops for design of new bandstand.
New bandstand completed and installed at Pavilion.

2002 Arts Council awards £4.1million grant to fund Pavilion restoration.
Heritage Lottery Fund announces £1.9million grant.
At AGM Pavilion Trust agrees to cease operation.
Members agree to become Friends of De La Warr Pavilion Charitable Trust.

credits

Patrons
Earl De La Warr, Sir Hugh Casson, Sir Denys Lasdun, Esther Mendelsohn Joseph, Lord Rayne, Sir John Smith, Lady Susan Lasdun.

Major Funders
Arts Council of England, Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society, Bexhill Rotary Club, Construction Industry Training Board, East Sussex County Council, English Heritage, Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust, Foundation for Sport and the Arts, Garfield Weston, Gatsby Trust, Headley Trust, Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust, Linbury Trust, Manifold Trust, Monument Trust, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Pilgrim Trust, Rayne Foundation, Royal Institute of British Architects, Seeboard, South East Arts, Sussex Careers Services, Sussex TEC, Cyril Sweett.

Executive Committee Members 1990–2002
Pauline Bullock, James Coath, Peter Evenden, Alastair Fairley, Sheila Harper, Ena Humpage, Margaret Jones, Brian Kentfield, Don Kimber, Heather Legg, Heather Morrey, Suse Mullens, Marilyn Nicholson, Mary Parkins, Michael Prochak, John Redwood, Jack Seabrook, Imogen Stooke Wheeler, Jill Theis, Yvonne Trew, Roger Trott, Graham Whitham, Jan Wicks.

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